

WILDLIFE SERVICES - OPERATIONS

PROGRAM PROFILE

Goal	Insure that high quality wildlife damage control technical and operational assistance is available for protecting agricultural, industrial, and natural resources, and to safeguard public health and safety through identification, demonstration, and application of the most appropriate methods of control.
Enabling Legislation	Authority exists under Animal Damage Control (ADC) Act of March 2, 1931, (7 USC 426-426b, and 426c as amended). Wildlife Services was transferred to USDA-APHIS from U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in December 1985, pursuant to PL 99-190; H.J. Res. 465, 99 Cong. 1st Sess. 1985. Transfer of personnel, property, records, and unexpended appropriations associated with program was completed by April 1, 1986.
Economic Significance	Protects America's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry from damage caused by wildlife. Improves public health and safety by providing protection from wildlife which constitute public health and safety hazards. Protects property and natural resources from wildlife damage.
Principal Approach And Methods Used to Achieve Goals	APHIS' Wildlife Services provides technical information, training, and assistance necessary for affected landowners and other cooperators to control damage caused by wildlife. For more complex and persistent damage problems, and where cooperative funding is provided, program specialists will conduct direct control operations to resolve them. The program uses a combination of physical, biological, and chemical control methods best suited for each situation.
History	Wildlife Services was part of USDA from 1931 until 1939, when it was transferred to USDI-FWS. In 1985, Congress transferred the program to USDA-APHIS. Since that time, APHIS has implemented a program organizational structure, established cooperative programs in the Eastern States, and placed increasing priority on controlling crop damage due to blackbirds and other migratory birds,

protecting threatened and endangered species from predation, and preventing wildlife-aircraft collisions at airports. On August 1, 1997 the program name was changed from Animal Damage Control, to Wildlife Services, to better represent the expanding scope of the program.

State and Local Cooperation

Many Federal, State, county, and private organizations cooperate in program activities.

Involvement of Other Agencies

FWS, Extension Service, Cooperative State Research Service, Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife management agencies, State health departments, and State agricultural agencies.

RESOURCE DATA

-----Obligations-----

	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Reimbursement</u>	<u>User Fees</u>	<u>Staff-Years</u>
FY 1996	26,764,984	23,200,128	--	472
FY 1997	27,344,275	27,498,589	--	320
FY 1998	28,988,802	30,026,579	--	341
FY 1999	30,748,942	32,418,822	--	340
FY 2000 (est.)	31,395,000	34,000,000	--	323
FY 2001 (est.)	28,684,000	31,000,000	--	272
	<u>APHIS</u>	<u>Coop</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Contingency Fund</u>
Cum. (FY 99)	\$364,593,607	\$259,597,495	\$624,191,102	\$1,927,976

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Protecting American Agricultural Resources

APHIS continues to work to protect sunflowers from damage caused by blackbirds in North and South Dakota. Forty-five to 70 million blackbirds migrate through the Dakotas each fall, resulting in a \$5 million loss to producers. Damage is often concentrated near cattail marshes where the birds roost. Since 1991, APHIS has

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been treating marshes to reduce the density of cattails, thereby, decreasing their attractiveness to migrating blackbirds. The effects of the treatment last from 4 to 5 years or longer. In 1999, WS treated almost 1,443 acres of cattails. In addition, WS treated 15 sunflower fields totaling 2,400 acres to manage blackbird damage, using DRC-1339 on rice bait. WS personnel also attended 8 regional workshops sponsored by the National Sunflower Association and various seed manufacturers and provided approximately 750 sunflower producers with technical assistance in managing bird damage. In total, WS assisted about 665 sunflower farmers in FY 1999 by treating cattails, baiting sunflower fields, loaning propane cannons, and providing technical assistance.

APHIS conducted livestock protection activities for the cattle, sheep, and goats in cooperation with State, Federal, and local governments, including private individuals, for more than 10,000 resource owners in FY 1999. Cost-sharing continued to be emphasized while cooperators provided more than 50 percent of the total funding in this program area. Programs served producers located from California in the West to Virginia in the East. In addition to livestock protection activities, APHIS personnel responded to requests for assistance with crop damage caused by birds and timber damage caused by rodents.

Bovine tuberculosis is a concern to agricultural producers in Michigan. At the request of the Michigan Department of Agriculture in FY 1998, APHIS' WS removed part of a captive deer herd after bovine tuberculosis was confirmed in white-tailed deer on a private ranch in Presque Isle County. APHIS continues to work with the resource owner and State officials to ensure that the disease threat to livestock and other farm animals is abated. APHIS completed the project in 1999, 1 year ahead of schedule.

As the Eastern Timber wolf population continues to increase in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin so has the number of requests for assistance with wolf predation. In response to requests and in accordance with the Eastern Timber wolf recovery plan, APHIS provides damage management assistance to livestock and other resource

owners. In FY 1997, APHIS received 118 requests for assistance involving wolf predation to domestic animals. For FY 1998, APHIS received another 157 requests for assistance for confirmed wolf predation. This represents a 30 percent increase over the previous year. In FY 1999, WS confirmed the first Mexican gray wolf depredation of livestock in the southwestern United States. WS personnel in Arizona and New Mexico are cooperating with Fish and Wildlife Services biologists in alleviating wolf-producer conflicts.

Protecting Human Health and Safety

APHIS worked closely with the State wildlife agencies, the FWS, and local governments in addressing increased problems with non-migratory Canada geese in FY 1999. A primary concern in the Eastern and Central U.S., populations are increasing exponentially with numbers now exceeding 2 million birds. Problems include threats to air safety at airports and air bases, fecal contamination of water supplies and recreational beaches, and damage to lawns, turf areas, and agricultural resources.

Rabies in raccoons has spread up the East Coast and now threatens to move northward into Canada and westward across Ohio. In addition, coyote and fox rabies remain a threat to people, pets, and livestock in south Texas. APHIS is participating in joint efforts to establish rabies-free barriers to prevent the continuing movement of this infectious disease. APHIS established a Wildlife Rabies Management Team in FY 1998 to coordinate rabies control work in New York, Ohio, Texas, and Vermont. The primary cooperators and stakeholders include the State health departments, Cornell University, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Georgia (Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the State wildlife agencies. Over 884,500 oral rabies raccoon vaccine baits have been distributed over a 3,770-square mile area in Ohio, New York, and Vermont in 1998. Surveillance sampling is used to determine program effectiveness. In FY 1999, Texas and WS continued their cooperative efforts in implementing a comprehensive oral rabies vaccination program for coyotes and gray foxes. WS assisted in distributing one million vaccine/bait units in South Texas to control canine rabies epizootic, and 1.7 million bait units

in central Texas to control the gray fox epidemic. These bait units were distributed over approximately 33,100 square miles. Surveillance program results are still pending.

Collisions between aircraft and wildlife at airports have risen dramatically in recent years as a result of large population increases in many wildlife species, faster airplanes, and the increase in air traffic. Wildlife strikes cost U.S. aviation more than \$300 million a year between 1992 and 1996. About 3,600 wildlife strikes to civil aircraft are reported each year and the U.S. Air Force alone reports more than 2,500 strikes. Over 24,000 strikes with aircraft have been recorded for the period 1990-1999. The requests for assistance in managing wildlife hazards at airports and military air bases continues to increase. In 1999, WS personnel provided wildlife hazard management assistance to 363 airports in 47 states and Guam, and wildlife biologists conducted 152 operational direct control projects on 110 airports and military air bases. Risk reduction efforts for 113 direct control projects indicate that we reduced risk by 75 percent or more for 71 projects (63 percent of the direct control projects); we reduced risk by less than 75 percent for 42 projects (37 percent of the projects). WS provided full-time assistance to O'Hare and Midway Airports in Chicago; Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky Airport; Dulles; Atlantic City International, New Jersey; Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington; and Orlando and Sarasota-Bradenton Airports in Florida. In addition, WS has full-time personnel stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida, and Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

Fighter aircraft damage from gulls alone at Langley Air Force Base (AFB) in Virginia increased almost \$1 million in 1998. In addition, takeoffs and landings were aborted or canceled because of deer on or near the runway. Langley AFB requested WS assistance in conducting a wildlife hazard assessment, writing a Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) 1999, a full-time biologist, funded by the Air Force and stationed at Langley AFB, began the wildlife hazard assessment. Site-specific data on wildlife populations will be collected for a period of 1 year; this

information will then be used to develop the BASH plan. In addition, we have begun intensive harassment programs to scare Canada geese from the airfield and golf course. WS has also removed numerous pigeons from the hangars, reducing the accumulation of droppings on aircraft undergoing maintenance and reducing health risks to mechanics.

The collision of birds with aircraft is a serious problem at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York City. Gulls, of which 60 percent were laughing gulls, accounted for 86 percent of bird strikes from 1988 to 1990. During FY 1999, WS continued efforts to reduce laughing gull strikes at JFK. As a result of the operational gull management program, gull strikes have been reduced by 92 percent since 1992. FY 1999 was the first year we documented a reduction of over 90 percent in bird strikes.

WS continues to direct the cooperative program to prevent the inadvertent spread of the brown tree snake (BTS) from Guam to other Pacific Islands, Hawaii, and the U.S. mainland. During the year, the Department of Defense allocated \$1 million to help fund the BTS program at 11 military installations in Guam and Hawaii. WS has trained 14 Jack Russell terriers to detect snakes in outbound military and civilian cargo at transportation facilities. Wildlife specialists also use traps, glue boards, barriers, nighttime fence-line searches with spotlights, habitat modification, and prey-based removal to control the BTS. To keep BTS out of Hawaii, WS established a protocol for responding to snake sightings in Hawaii.

Protecting Natural Resources

The recovery of gray wolves in western Montana, Central Idaho, and the Yellowstone National Park is succeeding beyond the expectations of wildlife biologists associated with this project. The number of wolves currently in the 3 areas is approaching 300, the target recovery goal. APHIS continues to play a key role in the recovery process by capturing wolves that attack or threaten livestock. Under the direction of the FWS, APHIS employees work on the ground and from aircraft to capture the wolves causing damage. In FY 1998, APHIS responded to over 50

incidents of suspected wolf predation on livestock in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

APHIS continued cooperating with the National Park Service, the FWS, and the U.S. Forest Service in a program to protect reintroduced black-footed ferrets from predators in Badlands National Park and Conata Basin in South Dakota. In 1997, APHIS' work to remove predators resulted in a significant improvement in ferret survival. In 1998, APHIS provided training to National Park Service employees so that they could conduct the predator control activities.

APHIS continues to assist the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in recovery efforts for the Aleutian Canada goose, a threatened species. Introduced Arctic foxes have decimated traditional nesting populations of these geese on the Aleutian Island chain, and APHIS is assisting efforts to remove the fox from key islands. Efforts are already paying off. Goose populations are beginning to recover, and they are being considered for down listing from the endangered species list.

WS expanded the endangered species protection project in Florida in FY 1999 to include all of the Florida panhandle and Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on the Atlantic coast of Florida. Hobe Sound NWR is one of the premier turtle nesting areas in Florida with an average of 1,500 sea turtle nests laid on the three mile stretch of beach annually. Due to WS efforts, predation rates dropped in all locations, from 68 percent to less than one percent at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park, and from 50 percent to zero at Gulf Islands National Seashore. Additionally, these two locations have the most sea turtle nests ever recorded. We have achieved success for other species as well. The program's predator control efforts have expanded the ranges and populations of several species of endangered beach mice in the Florida panhandle.

APHIS is cooperating with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the FWS, and the University of Maryland Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in developing a 3-year pilot program for managing nutria damage to coastal marshes on the Chesapeake Bay in

Maryland. The pilot program will be conducted at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to determine the feasibility of removing this exotic species and restoring the badly damaged marsh ecosystem.

APHIS personnel conducted a gull damage management project for the National Audubon Society on Jenny Island in Casco Bay near Portland, Maine, to allow roseate terns and common terns to reestablish nesting colonies there. Last year, 12 pairs of roseate terns and 1,068 pairs of common terns nested on the 3-acre island making it the third largest tern nesting colony in Maine.

APHIS worked closely with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Black Bear Conservation Committee, and other agencies to increase public awareness about the Louisiana black bear, a Federally listed threatened species in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Emphasis was placed on publicizing the importance of reporting black bear conflicts rather than harming offending bears.

In FY 1999, WS provided wildlife damage management classes and guest lectures were provided to graduate and undergraduate classes at several universities including the University of Georgia, Clemson University, West Virginia University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Auburn University, Mississippi State University, Louisiana State University, Rutgers University, University of Vermont, and the University of Tennessee. These communications have been very well received by both students and faculty and have been very successful in educating future wildlife management biologists in the importance of addressing wildlife-human conflicts in a professional and responsible manner.

APHIS personnel also conducted activities for the protection and recovery of the endangered Puerto Rican parrot in the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico. Activities focused on the abatement of parrot predation by the exotic mongoose.

Protecting Property

Humans and wildlife continue to compete for habitat as both populations continue to increase. In FY 1999, APHIS provided technical assistance to approximately 60,000

individuals in urban and suburban areas concerned with wildlife damage to property.

Beaver damage management activities conducted in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin throughout 1999 averted the impending loss of an estimated \$19.39 million in damage to forest and agricultural resources, waterways, and highway infrastructures. The benefit-cost ratio of WS services was 6 to 1, or \$6 saved for every \$1 spent.

In FY 1999, Oklahoma WS personnel responded to 2,138 requests for assistance involving beaver damage in that state. Beaver caused damage by flooding timber and agricultural crops, by burrowing into dikes or embankments, and by gnawing and cutting trees. Beaver were responsible for over \$1.5 million in damage to a variety of resources including timber, crops, rangelands, roads, bridges, flood control structures and other properties.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources and APHIS expanded their partnership by providing a toll-free telephone service for Indiana residents. The 1-800 Nuisance Wildlife Hotline service went into effect in July 1998. Similar toll-free services are available in Maryland and Wisconsin through cooperative relationships with the Maryland and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources.